

An Insect Ventriloquist.

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That man is not the only creature possessing ventriloquous ability is a fact admitted by all students of nature. Many birds are known to be excellent ventriloquists, and any person who has collected insects through the notes of their song knows that many of our species are adepts in the art. Belonging to the order Orthoptera are a number of species that, at times at least, are not readily located by means of their stridulation. Usually, however, a circular walk of fifty feet or so in diameter will encompass the songster and quite accurately locate its position. Rarely is a specimen found over a hundred feet or so from its apparent position.

The most extreme case of deceptive location of a singing insect that ever came under my observation, and I have located many a noisy orthopteron by its song, occurred on the evening of August 2d, of last year. Dr. Dyar and I were stopping at Longmire's Springs, at the base of Mt. Rainier, in Washington. About dark, as we were strolling up the road through the forest, we heard an insect stridulating by the roadside. I at once recognized it as an orthopteron, but one whose note was unfamiliar to me. Both Dr. Dyar and I readily located its apparent position in a small bunch of twigs not over eight feet from us. Being very desirous of capturing the insect I cautiously approached, but when I reached the spot where I supposed the creature to be secreted the sound no longer seemed to proceed from that point, but from an old stump a dozen feet further on. This new position was carefully approached, only to find the delusive sound moved to a point a few yards still further on. I now proceeded to persistently follow that spooky note from point to point, sometimes straight ahead and sometimes to one side or the other, till a distance of over two hundred yards was traversed. Dr. Dyar, lacking the enthusiasm of an Orthopterist in a quest of this nature, strolled on, leaving me to pursue my *ignis fatuus* alone. My chase led me over great stones, under fallen logs, across a ravine and up a steep hill. Darkness approached rapidly, the little light

remaining of the fast dying day was lost amid the great ever-green trees about me. The phantom note, ever sounding beyond me, together with my somber surroundings, brought over me a feeling of exaggerated loneliness that made light and human companionship very desirable. I therefore gave over my fruitless chase and hastened back to the road and was soon pouring my tale of woe into the unsympathetic ears of Dr. Dyar.

Other specimens of the insect were heard singing as we returned, and the next evening, armed with a very dirty lantern, kindly loaned us by an accommodating host, we sallied forth to capture one of the songsters. This we succeeded in doing, capturing two males after much climbing over and under fallen timber. The species proved to be, as I had surmised it would, *Cyphoderris piperi*, a species described by me some time before from the same locality. The very large and inflated elytra of this insect seem especially adapted to the production of ventriloquous notes. The effect was probably intensified in the case cited above by local conditions. The difference between the apparent and actual location varies, as that of the two specimens captured was not so much as that observed the preceding evening, being probably something over one hundred yards.

Cyphoderris piperi was described as a variety of *C. monstrosus*, but it is very surely a distinct species and should be so listed. Like *monstrosus*, which has been reported as ventriloquous by Turley, *piperi* is slow of motion, and when disturbed shows little inclination to leap. The specimens taken by Dr. Dyar and myself crawled slowly along the twigs upon which they were resting, keeping on the side opposite the observer. They sometimes stridulate quite persistently, but usually they cease their song when closely approached.

No, Maude, dear, the bee culturist doesn't suffer from hives any more than the lumber dealer does from shingles.

HENRY A. WENZEL and Harry Kacher had a most successful collecting trip to Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mountains, Arizona. They brought back many rare and interesting Coleoptera.